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EDITORIAL

A teacher of mathematics remarked recently that he now has a method by which he can teach in seven days matter which it
Certainty requires nineteen days to teach by the older method.
versus Moreover, standardized tests show that the seven-day
Fumbling learning is 25 per cent more effective than the other.
The secret is merely a changed order of presentation—to which he was led by his study of educational psychology! Experience indicates that similar gains in efficiency in the teaching of English may be made by the application of the known laws of learning. Many a teacher facing the necessity of teaching a piece of literature which in his own student days he did not really like has cheerfully decided to do his best by the students and the author. He has determined the theme—call it basic idea, or what you will—of the selection and then planned carefully the introduction, the actual reading (to or by his students), and the succeeding discussion, all to help the students see what the author saw as the author saw it. At the end of the study he has been surprised to find that he himself almost or quite liked the selection. All this the student of educational psychology could have predicted beforehand, for that teacher was studying under mental conditions favorable to learning and to appreciation. Such profitable methods as he stumbled upon, but probably neither reproduced nor adapted to his students, may be devised with considerable certainty by the English teacher who has even a fair knowledge of how the mind actually works. One may depend to some extent upon devices reported as successful by others, but even in this there is waste unless he has a reliable means of determining what are the essential and what the irrelevant features of each device.

But two objections can be made to the proposal that English teachers should be somewhat trained in practical psychology: (1) English isn't mathematics, many insist; English is a matter

of art, of feeling, of inspiration, they say. Very true; but art, feeling, inspiration are mental activities and subject to the laws of mind. The psychology of appreciation is one of the most fruitful fields of study. (2) English is so complex a subject that the teacher's whole time is required for the mastery of material. Indeed, his whole time is insufficient for this mastery. It follows that he has no time for educational theory. Rather it *would* follow if mastery of all the fields of literature and of all the fine points in literary interpretation or in composition were the chief purpose of the teacher's existence. Since his real excuse for occupying the instructor's chair is to hand on to his students the fundamental things he knows and to set them safely upon the way to the discovery of more for themselves, he must take time for any study which will make that transmission of skill and appreciation fairly certain.

Nor need he neglect that personal devotion to art and culture which has been his chief pride. Four or five wisely chosen courses will make him fundamentally intelligent concerning the learning processes, and an occasional hour devoted to private study will keep the matter fresh and growing in his mind. One of the most satisfactory results of such study is that the methods it induces call for wider and more thorough scholarship than do most of those they displace. Thus the English teacher, through being for a time a student of education, finally becomes yet more the student of literature and of the art of expression.

Today the teacher of English is burdened as never before. In the post-war world his task is larger than in the old days, and he sees it more completely. At the same time there is thundering in his ears the increasing demand for efficiency in the performance of all tasks. In such a situation he cannot afford to neglect the aid to economy of time and effort and to certainty of results which is offered by a reasonable acquaintance with modern educational psychology.